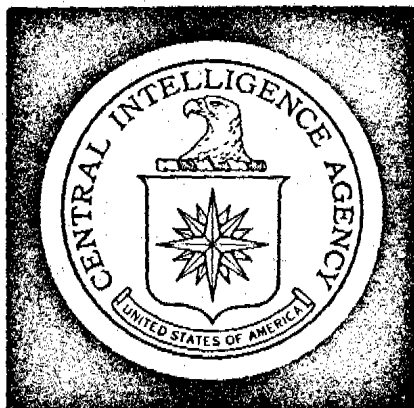


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

*The Impact of Logistic Factors
on NVA Offensive Capabilities During 1971*

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
25 March 1971

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Impact of Logistic Factors on NVA
Offensive Capabilities During 1971The Problem

This memorandum has two purposes. First, it assesses the performance of the NVA logistic system in the Panhandle of Laos in order to estimate the volume of supplies which the North Vietnamese will have moved into South Vietnam and Cambodia during the current dry season. Second, it relates the estimated throughput of supplies to the logistic requirements of enemy forces in order to determine what levels of offensive activity these forces will be able to sustain during 1971.

The memorandum focuses primarily on logistic factors such as the total volume of supplies which must be moved to maintain the system, to compensate for supply losses, and to satisfy consumers in South Laos, South Vietnam and Cambodia. To provide better perspective on the possible strategic choices available to Hanoi during 1971, the memorandum also considers such factors as Hanoi's own views, as we understand them, on the military course it will pursue over the next year. It does not give any detailed consideration of manpower constraints which are a vital factor in the choice of options available to North Vietnam. The estimates presented in this memorandum on the input and throughput of supplies are necessarily tentative since the dry season still has four to eight weeks to go. As the season is concluded these estimates may be revised substantially.

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VII. Conclusions

41. The burden imposed on the logistic system in southern Laos has become significantly greater over the past year. Loss of the Cambodian supply routes, the augmentation of logistic and security forces in southern Laos, and recent Allied incursions in the Tchepone area have greatly complicated Hanoi's support of the war in South Vietnam and Cambodia.

42. Prior to 1970, North Vietnam was able to provide logistic support to its forces in southern Laos and South Vietnam and Cambodia by maintaining a daily flow of supplies during the dry season estimated at 224 tons a day. As a result of the developments in 1970, we now estimate that during the current dry season Hanoi will have to move a daily average of 280-290 tons of supplies to meet its logistic commitments in southern Laos, in all of South Vietnam, and in Cambodia. The execution of this task has been greatly complicated by the disruptive effects of Operation Lam Son 719, which imposed new burdens on the logistic system. Even though the effects of Operation Lam Son 719 were limited in duration, they sharply increased the consumption of supplies within Laos, accounted for the capture or destruction of large amounts of supplies, and forced the diversion, for a short time at least, of goods otherwise intended for South Vietnam and Cambodia.

43. The current dry season has four to eight weeks to go and estimates made now are highly tentative, but on the basis of the evidence that is currently available we estimate that the input of supplies from North Vietnam to Laos during this dry season will range from 70,000 to 89,000 tons. We also estimate that between 11,800 and 15,500 tons of these supplies will emerge ultimately in South Vietnam and/or Cambodia.

44. This volume of throughput -- 49 to 64 tons a day -- must satisfy daily requirements in South Vietnam and Cambodia of 44 to 50 tons a day. Even though the balance between throughput and requirements is tight, we estimate that the throughput will be adequate for the Communists to sustain military

activity at the low levels observed during 1970. More to the point, this volume of throughput will not permit the Communists to build up any significant volume of stockpiles and will make it imperative that their next logistic offensive get off to an extremely early start next dry season.

45. In sum, North Vietnam's logistic position over the past year has become greatly complicated. Far from enjoying a wide range of logistic options to support alternative strategies, Hanoi appears tied, for 1971 at least, to a continuation of the low-profile war fought in 1970. While the enemy's logistic situation does not preclude an occasional high point of combat activity in either South Vietnam or Cambodia, major sustained warfare seems definitely to be ruled out.

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